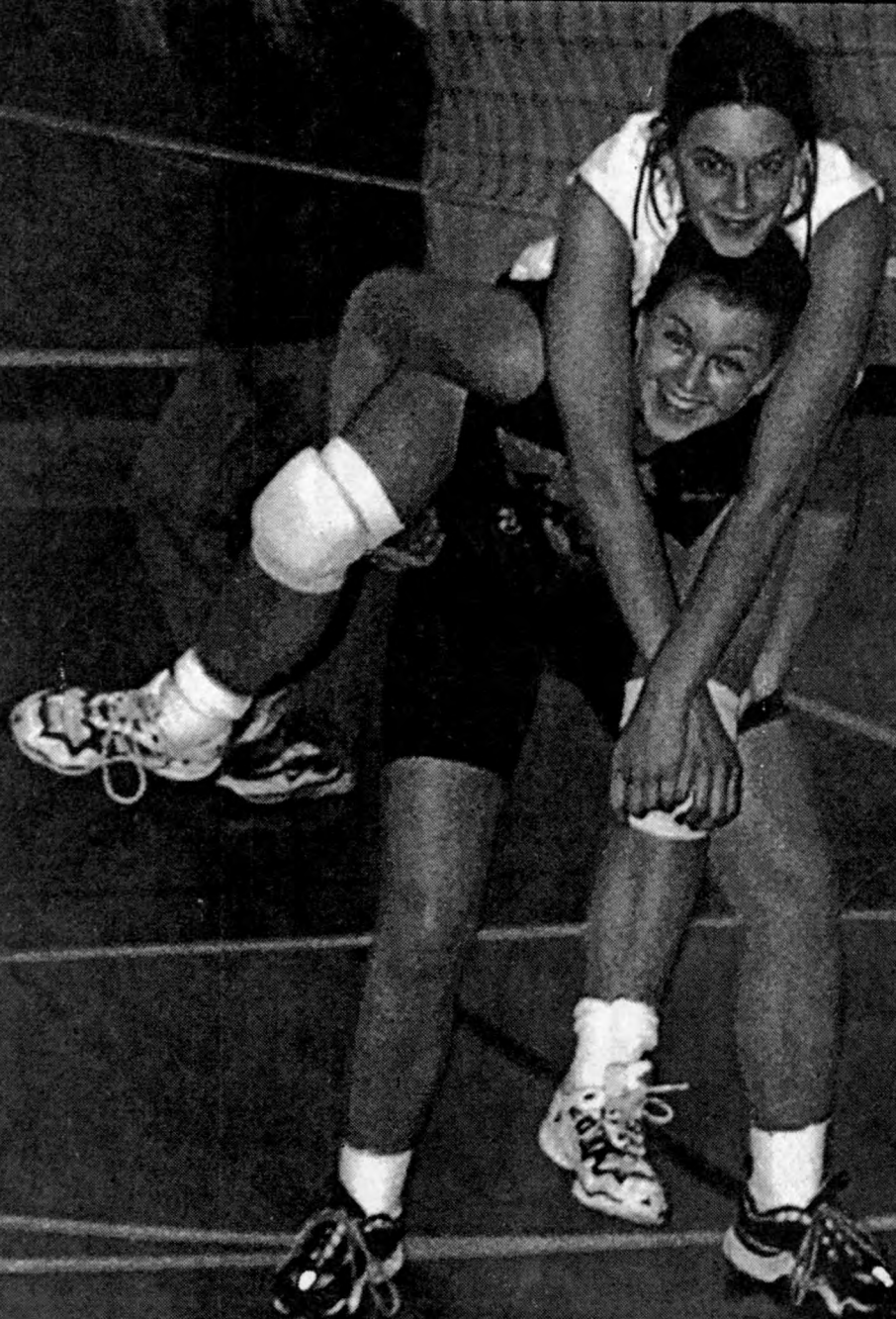


The bard

observer

October 19, 2000 Issue 3, Volume 11 Annandale on Hudson, NY 12504



Darkroom Approved
Debates Appraised
Art Reviewed

Green Lights for Student Run Darkroom

Building behind library approved, B & G begins restorative work, search for funding for equipment ensues

by **John Garrett**

For all of those Bardians who enjoy carrying around pricey professional quality cameras (or vintage yard sale finds left over from World War I) and pretending to be photo majors despite having moderated into philosophy and literature, Nicole Novak has come to save the day. Along with support from a group of other students, Nicole joined forces with Dean of First-Year Students, John Kelly Jr. to set up a student-run, student-operated dark room.

"There is an obviously huge dissatisfaction [amongst some students] with the photo department at Bard . . . it allows so few people access to its facilities," stated Novak. "Many students familiar with photography, or those who want to explore their interests further should be able to have a facility without necessarily being a part of the photo department." Apparently John Kelly Jr. agreed.

Kelly helped Novak search for open spaces on campus. God knows Botstein's projects and all of the damned housing construction currently taking place are making the available space at Bard hard to come by - regardless of the six hundred plus acres. The search ended up in the basement of one of the faculty office buildings. "You know that sculpture that looks like pipes flopping up and down and peeing by the library? It's in the building behind that," Novak said.

The idea of a student run dark room is not truly an original. Administrators have tried in the past to set up such a space, but the attempts never panned out. Jonathan Becker was the most recent to act on the idea but his attempt was

thwarted for reasons mostly financial (this means enough students didn't back him in trying to convince the rest of the administration to defer a tiny portion of the millions of dollars floating around campus for all sorts of different projects). The difference with Novak's case is the action was student initiated, and we all know that the best way for things to get done at Bard is to get a group of students together and make a real big stink. A stinky stink.

There are still some details being worked out between John Kelly, Jim Brudvig, and the B&G staff. Noted Novak "We just finished phase one - finding space for the room, and now we have to move to phase two - working with B & G to make the space usable, and from there we work on finding the funds to equip the room with sinks, ventilation and everything you need to have a darkroom."

Although the administration has approved the use of the space Novak and Kelly found, the cost of the endeavor and the relative support of the student body will ultimately decide how soon the darkroom opens. Novak explained, "We expect it to be funded by the Bard administration, but it is going to take probably about \$4,000, and this is not something we want participating students to have to pay for. I am interested in knowing exactly what students want, so we can be sure they get it."

So, if all goes well and enough Bard students show their support, the already approved darkroom will eventually come to pass. Interpretation: whine to administrators like we do so well here at Bard as much as you can about your support of the darkroom. And send Nicole Novak suggestions and comments via campus mail or e-mail at nicolenovak@hotmail.com.

No Entry for Nader at Presidential Debates

Green Party candidate questions private sector sponsorships of Debate Commission, sues for \$25,000

by **Jacob Gordan**

Despite having a ticket to the event, Green Party Presidential candidate Ralph Nader was turned away from the first round of presidential debates in Boston. He had received his ticket from a Northeastern student. Getting off the train on the UMass campus where the debates were being held, Nader was confronted by three state troopers and a "security consultant" for the Commission on Presidential Debates who told him that if he did not leave the university premises he would be arrested.

Radio reporters captured Mr. Nader asking the Debate Commission rep, "Deep down inside, do you agree?" "Sir, it is irrelevant," was the response.

The ticket would have included Nader in a pre-debate discussion and then a live TV viewing of the event from another room. Mr. Nader had also been invited by FOX news to do a post-debate commentary but was unable to do so, having been barred from the premises.

Janet Brown, executive director of the Commission on Presidential Debates, a private organization that funds the debates, said, "This is a private event and we are a private sponsor. . . and if someone comes in who did not receive a ticket from one of those groups who have the authority to distribute them, then it is our policy that they are not invited to attend the event."

Although Ms. Brown claimed that tickets are non-transferable, the student who gave Nader the ticket claims that when he called the Commission's RSVP number to ask if they were, they said yes.

Ralph Nader is now suing the Commission on Presidential Debates for a

\$25,000 contribution to the Harvard Law School's center for electoral reform. He is also asking for an apology from the commission and taking legal action against the Federal Elections Commission to keep corporate contributions out of national debates. According to Nader and Scott Lewis, who presented the case before a three judge panel on Thursday, corporate influence in presidential debates is unconstitutional and is a violation of democracy. The Federal Elections Commission is a non-profit organization that holds the debates. Major contributors of this year's debates include Anheuser-Bush, AT&T and Sun Microsystems. The commission sets important rules, such as what percentage polling percentage a candidate needs to qualify for a spot in the debates. It recently set the bar at 15%, up from previous elections, and as a result Ralph Nader will not qualify. The most recent Reuters/MSNBC poll shows Nader at seven percent nationally. Most countries require between 3% and 6% approval ratings to take part in national debates.

During the recent green party "super rallies" (the last of which sold out

Madison Square Garden) Nader vowed to launch a people's debates commission: a citizen run group that would hold federally funded debates and take legal action against the Federal Election Commission. In New York, he promised some 16,000 supporters that the green party would never again be barred from presidential debates.

• NEWS IN BRIEF • NEWS IN BRIEF • NEWS IN BRIEF • NEWS IN BRIEF • by John Garrett •

A HALLOWEEN TREAT FOR ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Here you are, tree-huggers! Bard College will be host to Julia Butterfly-Hill, a "tree-sitting activist," for a talk on October 31 - appropriately in the Olin Atrium. Julia began her noted mission to save trees in December of 1997, when she started a sit-in on a thousand year-old redwood. She was fighting a logging company which wanted to cut the tree and was in the tree 738 days before loggers agreed to leave the tree and a two acre buffer around it.

Julia is not a butterfly, or a hill, but she seems to feel - as most hippies and radical environmentalists do - that she is a direct relative to both butterflies and hills (and, in Julia's case, redwood trees). The tree she lived in for over two years was named Luna, and Julia has documented her battle in her book, *Legacy of Luna*, in case you are interested.

BIRTHDAY BASH SCHEDULED FOR CHINUA ACHEBE

If you walk around Bard College long enough, you will soon realize how many important students we have here. Statistically, Bard ranks among the top schools in the category of important students. Oddly enough, important students attract important faculty and Chinua Achebe is one of the most important faculty Bard has ever been able to call its own. So Happy F@ck**g Birthday, Professor Achebe, how's it feel to be 70 years old?

There'll be a party - we'll call it a two-day conference to salute your incredible career. B.Y.O.B.

At least there will be plenty of intellectuals in the guise of Bard students to accompany you through all of the speaking two days can supply. Oh, the party-goers

will have to have reservations, and they must call Mark Primoff to book a reservation and to get location, date and time info. His number is 758-7410.

NEWS BRIEF SUGGESTS THAT ART IS JUST A CLEVER SYNONYM FOR FUNDRAISING

In Bard's ongoing campaign to get alumnae to give us their money, the Woods studio will be open to display work by former student Seth Rubin from October 19 to November 18. Like all Bard Art, the work promises to be good and interesting. It will most likely make no sense, although Donna Harkavy and Margaret Mathews-Bereson write, "Rubin Speaks of his works as performances for the camera, and his titles, such as 'I Threw Ash on the Snow and Then Lay Down in a Walking Position' underscore the importance of the process to the artist." Good and interesting, like Bard Art should be.

STILL UNDECIDED?

We shall discuss: "Senator Lieberman and the Debate Over Religion and Politics." You guessed it, Olin will be the site of a rad Bard speak-session about politics, and YOU should be the first one to attend. Why, I cannot tell you, but it is speculated that the intent is to educate a fairly well educated group of people about our upcoming presidential vote in order to help resolve the problem of uneducated voting in the United States.

I guess after you attend you should go tell some yokels about what you learn in order help educate the uneducated voting population of the U.S.A..

Send us letters, call us and tell you what you think:
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Candidacy + Bush/Gore = Violence

And you thought punditry was dead. . . .

by Adam Davison

The Weis Cinema was crammed full of Bard Students on Wednesday night, October 11th, when many postponed their reading plans to watch the second thrilling episode of the election 2000 Presidential Debates. The boys looked good as the cameras watched them acting relaxed and presidential. The commentators droned on about expectations in the fallout of the first match-up: No sighing, Al — act your age. And George, don't look stupid out there — hope you did your homework. Sure enough, they came on their best behavior and it all panned out just fine — Gore's make-up was better, he was pleasantly sedated, more or less keeping his tall facts and fuzzy numbers to himself. Bush showed he could talk foreign policy without tripping up, in fact, he demonstrated a real eagerness to win the privilege as Commander in Chief to kill, kill, and kill again.

He has proven that it's one thing he's good at — he doesn't even have to spend much time thinking about it (about fifteen minutes before his two-hour jog). If done judiciously, it makes for good government — that's his compassionate position. Gore seemed a bit more grave — sure, he was prepared to kill again if necessary. He reminded us that we are at a unique moment in history and that we need to use our military and cultural advantage to enforce the killing standards the world should expect from such an awesome force. In the closing-quarters of the world, a leader is needed who will draw the line between good and bad killing. It is just to murder in order to uphold our Values and to prevent others from killing for the wrong ones — in the case of a genocide, for instance. Al asked if his opponent would kill to prevent killing in the world at large, as he has in his home state of Texas? Bush back-pedaled a little in the face of this challenge, agreeing to interventions when they weren't intended as "nation-building" missions. He seemed more interested in

the kind of action father made his career on: destroy them outright and, if you can't do that, let them destroy themselves, then they'll have to let us build them back up — enter the IMF and our "interests." He envisions a foreign policy that establishes a clear U.S. position, in contrast to maintaining a military omnipresence in all the global hotspots as we do now.

In spite of this difference, both candidates more or less agreed on the key foreign policy issues, making good on the old saying that partisanship should stop on the water's edge. Bush generously endorsed the Clinton Administration's general performance on the global field, as if to say, good one in Kosovo — you showed 'em

the ultimate price for lawlessness — a price Saddam himself has yet to pay. But he made it clear that he was itching to bomb him again and clean up the mess his daddy left for Clinton once and for all.

Yet Bush is a compassionate man. In response to one of the many attacks Gore made on his record, in this case pointing to Texas's staggeringly high number of uninsured women and children, Bush said, "If he's trying to allege I'm a hard-hearted person and I don't care about children he's absolutely wrong." He has to make a convincing argument here, because he just raved about the wonders of the death penalty and the need to "fight and win war." He needs to prove that he can play

ed out that other peoples may resent America imposing their Values on them, which raises the question if hate can go unpunished abroad provided it does not affect the national interest. Perhaps the values change at the water's edge, where the compassion that works at home to soften the oppression that the state depends upon to maintain its power is a hard sugar pill to swallow when you're looking down the barrel of the biggest, best gun in history.

Gore wanted to show that he would take any decision involving mass murder very seriously, saying that we must be prepared to commit troops when the national interest was threatened, if only symbolically. It is in our interests to stop mass murder because it goes against our Values. Gore wants to play good cop on the global beat — something Bush shies away from, saying "we can't be all things to all people." Well, clearly we can be both the punisher and the savior thanks to our military prowess.

The next Commander in Chief will need to fortify the thin line between tough love and hate, making peace with war, and stopping hatred with terror both at home and abroad. In this "unique moment in history," we can expect him, as Gore said, "to step up to the plate" and start commanding a little more respect for his Values. This is one thing that Wednesday's debate made clear — this nation's unprecedented power comes at the cost of fear-mongering and murdering and no vote is going to change that this fall.

Many of those sitting in the Weis Cinema laughed as the candidates made fools of themselves. When Bush said of his homegrown hate criminals, "You know what's going to happen to them? They're going to be put to death," with a proud semi-smirk on his face, some didn't know whether to laugh or scream. While death and entertainment are no strange bedfellows, if these beasts breed they might get the last laugh.

The next Commander in Chief will need to fortify the thin line between tough love and hate, making peace with war, and stopping hatred with terror both at home and abroad.

who's boss that time. At one point the moderator, Jim Lehrer, rattled off a list of the major direct military actions of the last twenty years, asking the candidates if they would have handled them differently than previous administrations. Gore approved of them all (except for one — Lebanon), petting George for the bang-up job his daddy did. For Bush's part, he backed them all except Haiti (a nation-building gig), then he jokingly recognized a "conflict of interest" when talking about the wars of the Reagan/Bush years. What a cut up! Yes sir, just like his daddy, he wants "to fight and win war."

He's proven that the apple never falls far from the trigger-happy tree in Texas, where he's proud to make criminals pay

the good cop, too — both at home and abroad.

Gore faces the same problem. If he cares so much about women and children, how can he support sanctions that make Texas look like Disneyland in comparison to Iraq? I'm sure they don't want to kill — they have to. It's the price of justice.

Bush said, "When you murder somebody it's hate. The crime is hate and . . . I'm not exactly sure how you enhance the penalty any more than the death penalty." If all murder is hate, then the penalty for murder is hate, and so on. Where are the Values here? The most powerful nation cannot let hate go unhated at home or abroad — that's clear, but it also cannot be "all things to all people." Bush rightly point-

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• COLLEGE NEWS by Hasan Al Faruq •

Racism at U of Southern Florida?

LaTonya Greer and Patrice Coleman, two black members of the women's basketball team in University of South Florida, filed civil rights lawsuits against the University and women's basketball coach Jerry Ann Winters on Tuesday.

"Unfortunately, we will soon have more USF [women's] basketball players in court than on the court," said their attorney Jonathan Alpert, who also represents former players Dione Smith and Avia Lee, former assistant coach Tara Gibson and former secretary Lisa Walker. "The reason is because of the stonewalling and the racism practiced at an institutional level by the University of South Florida. None of this should have been necessary. None of this had to be necessary. None of this should have taken place."

Smith filed a lawsuit in August, while Lee filed her lawsuit three weeks ago. Gibson sent a complaint to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Walker supported the allegations in a letter to the Department of Education. According to Greer, when

she and two other players questioned why Winters recruited all white players, Winters accused them of being racist.

"She met with me and two players and the first thing that came out of her mouth is, 'I'm tired of you guys being racist,'" Greer said. "We asked what made her think we were racist. She said because we questioned why she had white recruits."

Greer said she was demoted to the second string behind Sonya Swick, who is white, because Greer questioned Winters' recruiting process.

"(Greer's) domination over Ms. Swick was so pronounced that during one practice, after the plaintiff physically overwhelmed Ms. Swick in defense, Coach Winters stopped practice and criticized the plaintiff for playing so hard and yelled at her in front of the entire team," the lawsuit states.

Greer also said when she asked Winters if she could join the coaching staff, Winters said there were no available positions. But Winters then gave the position to Swick.

features Carpe P.M.

Associated correspondent infiltrates Disney's decadent darkside

by Adam Davison

This Friday the 13, I went party hopping under a full moon amongst a crowd of fellow revelers. First off, I got a beer at a rock show and checked out the action on the dance floor. Then I moseyed on over to the country scene, which was a bore, so I headed up to the hip-hop/R & B dance party to get my groove on. After getting my fill of the thumping bass, I checked out the more sober history-buff social. This scene was a bit musty, so I stopped in at the 70s party for a spell before going on to make the rounds again, digging the canned techno in the streets, downing draughts and eyeing the crowd of generic-looking strangers suspiciously. No, this was not just another night out at Bard College, our private island-on-the-Hudson; I was on Pleasure Island, the site of Disney World's "largest theme party in the world."

Pleasure Island is part of Downtown Disney, the rat's new adult-oriented nightspot. It features a series of theme clubs, complete with bars and dance floors, cover bands and game rooms. It's an open container paradise where you can wander from scene to scene, sub-cultural set to sub-cultural set, and never skip a beat — thanks to Disney's trademark techno-aesthetic of continuity.

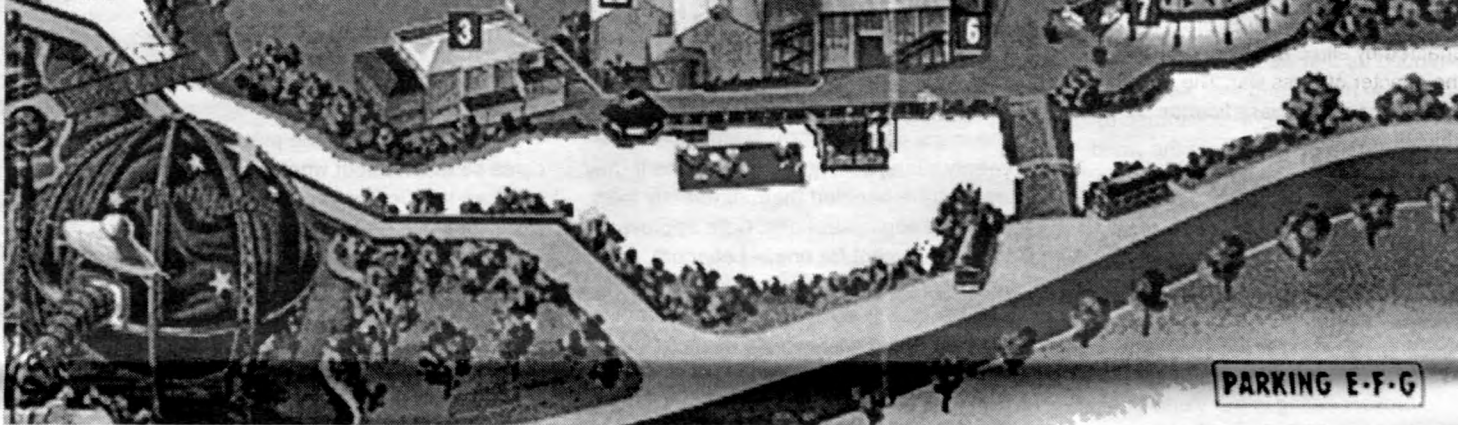
At one point, a group of dancers took a sidestage to reenact a Madonna video, complete with black leather lingerie. This is truly a new breed of Disney for a

new millennium. I couldn't help but think that Walt would have a stroke if he saw this modern-day Sodom by the Sea.

Unlike the other Disney parks, this area does not promote corporate products or convey historical narratives; it is simply a place to indulge in the pleasures of partying hard — adult-style. It is modern pop-inflected variation on the old fun park format, complete with the girly-shows and debauchery that inspired a disgusted Walt to build Disneyland.

But his Imagineers, staying true to Disney's general vision but abandoning his puritanism, created Pleasure Island as a space where the devoted may revisit their teenagehood as a counterpoint to the Magic Kingdom, where pilgrims perform a rite of

passage in a



Hark! Pleasures Too Many To Number!

space of the collective childhood (according to Walt). Surprisingly, actual teens mingled with the parents who left the rugrats back at the hotel, looking like corporate-sponsored clones partying it up on the set of Club MTV. Here, you don't need to ask, as I heard one parent do at Epcot, "What would Mickey think of what you just did?" Forget the mouse — it's party time!

The meta-theme of teenagehood becomes overt during a strange nightly ritual in which a troupe of dancers leads the crowd into the new year all over again. In this act, Mr. Computer hovers on the big screen behind the scantily clad dancers on stage, antagonizing the Mistress of Ceremonies. He is the Great Cyber Father who imposes a mid-night curfew on

the revelers. But when the clock strikes twelve, he'll be toasted by Y2K (remember that?), when the unconscious wish for technological collapse will finally come true, ushering in a utopian age of freedom from the tyranny of progress (read: adulthood).

The fearless MC tells the audience that it must raise the party up to Level 3 to pull off this coup. "Can we do it?" "Yeeees!" the crowd screams, playing along. Mr. Computer scoffs arrogantly, "You'll never reach Level 3!"

I was embarrassed to be there but I, too, was rooting for the end of all authority and the final destruction of the technodictatorship. So, to make a long story short, Level 3

is achieved and Mr. Computer crashes. He is then forced, as the vanquished, to concede and lift the curfew. Whoopee! Time to really party!! The MC shouts, "Carpe p.m.! Seize the night!!" As the fireworks and confetti fly.

This performance empitomizes the corporate cooptation of the language of empowerment that is today so prevalent. But, it was effective: A conga line forms as the crowd moves down the street. At this point, I had gotten my fill of pleasure, so I went home . . . dejected. Mr. Computer lives on and the curfew will be reinstated in the morning, when it starts all over again. . . .

Bingo Cards and New Corrugated Kline Trays: Inspector Cottingham Investigates

If you like elderly people, and who doesn't?, then you would probably like bingo at Clermont Fire Company Number Two. For a mere \$15 you can earn the chance at big big money, gambling without all the hassles of hunting down the nearest Indian reservation. Of course, you must learn, as all well-rounded people eventually do, the difference between "Small Round Robin," and a "Big Round Robin," as well as "Double Postage Stamp," bingo.

On Thursdays, from seven to eleven, you can play for big, big money (up to \$150 — the equivalent of 20 minutes of Freshman Seminar) against people as aged as your grandparents. In addition there is Budweiser on tap and apple pie slices for a dollar. South Germantown shows up in force, a full 30 or so seniors, to play some hardcore bingo every week. You can see heads in hands along with Menthol 100s as a monotone voice calls out bingo squares. The eventual peak is heralded when a raspy voice cries out "Bingo!" and people swear under their breath. You can bring your own chips, drinks and smokes, as well as your

good luck, because in fucking fourteen games I didn't win anything but a snide comment or two from one of my fellow one-foot-in-the-grave-competitors.

Like good crack, Bingo just sucks you in without you even realizing it. Whether it's the high stakes, the depressing fluorescent lights or having only one square left when someone else tries to yell "Bingo!" through smoke charred lungs, the exhilarating enterprise that is bingo at Clermont becomes a habit that is hard to resist. Merissa Lombardo, relishing in the proceedings, had this to say: "I love that woman in the red shirt. I want to be a regular from now on." I might add at this point that she was the only other person on premise below the age of near-dead. As people crowded around the concession stand at intermission, I couldn't disagree with a person I overheard saying in a wheezy voice, "I love bingo." I do too.

When students first walked into the venerable Kline Commons this year there seemed to be something amiss. Even the sober kids noticed

something was awry, and this time it wasn't the "not-nuggets". No, this change had little to do with the actual food itself—the change came as new trays provided for the student conveyance of meals. "They're flimsy, yet durable, with a definite dark side," said sophomore William Sprott. Why the change?

"The lunch trays should help things sliding on there. Because of the grooves," said John Overmars, someone in charge of things at Kline. Well, who else appreciates the, uh, groove of the new lunch trays? Perhaps a woman who we will identify here as "Sue" who works at the front register/counter said it best: "They're better than the ones last year because they're stronger." What isn't these days?

The new trays also seem to lack that easy to write on characteristic of the old trays, which now are being used to make pizza dough on. Overmars said that there are approximately 650 new trays, which he noted are a lot harder to write on, and that somewhere within the reaches of Chas the Kline God, there exists a whole catalog of trays. Stan, a Bard student, said of the new



"Mind Your Cards, Bernadette.": Patrons of Clermont bingo indulge in a little legal gambling. Naughty!

trays, "They are symbolic of something greater. Bard is wearing thin, the flimsiness of the administration is apparent in the flimsiness of the trays. Bard is dying." Either that or suffocating

on a sausage link, which is after all, understandable.

—Jacob Cottingham

Envisioning Urbanism at the Met

Despite attempted excorsism, specters of violence haunt "public" space

by Yates McKee

Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

MUSEUMS ARE SITES of cultural authority, where certain visions of social life are produced and legitimized, and where others are foreclosed and subordinated. This should be an important and familiar assertion to people concerned with radical social change. After all, the emergence of the public museum (whether of art, science or history) in the nineteenth century was a crucial mechanism through which the potentially unruly masses of laborers could be 'cultivated' into healthy, disciplined citizens of an emergent industrial order. British theorist Tony Bennet has located the 'opening' of the formerly aristocratic space of the museum to the 'public' in a larger network of social technologies he calls the "exhibitionary complex" which included shopping arcades, industrial fairs, and other institutional sites wherein the cultural and moral regulation of the working class could be enacted by elites kept awake at night by the specter of class war. The orderly arrangement and classification of material objects was essential to this effort, offering up a rational field of knowledge for inspection by viewers, who in turn, it was hoped, could be induced to shift the controlling gaze back upon themselves: "The exhibitionary complex perfected a self-monitoring system of looks in which the crowd comes to commune with and regulate itself through interiorizing the ideal and ordered view of itself as seen from the vision of power—a site of sight accessible to all."

Bennet's insights about the relationship between techniques of vision, display and social power are relevant on several levels to the "Art and the Empire City, New York 1825-61." The show not only chronicles the rise of an urban system in which the exhibitionary complex was a crucial means of social control; it also practically embodies and expands its mission: the production of a unified and "enlightened" public under the conflictual conditions of industrial and post-industrial capitalist development. Indeed, Fleetbank, the primary corporate sponsor of the exhibit has agreed to fund an unprecedented "Free Admission" program for 1.5 million school-children and their families to see the show. According to the museum's education coordinator, "Every New Yorker's greatest treasure is the Metropolitan Museum...with the help of Fleetbank, we are going the extra mile to reach out to every student in New York so that they—with their families—can be introduced to the cultural riches of their city."

The show's attempt to recruit a transcendental and homogeneous spectator—the "New Yorker"—is nicely dramatized by the ubiquitous presence throughout the exhibition of panoramic images of the city. Indeed, one such image was chosen as the official icon of the show, appearing on advertisements, shopping bags and the cover of the museum catalogue. *New York, 1855, from the Latting Observatory* by William Wellstood offers up an aerial view of the city, which is rendered into total, transparent object of knowledge for a radically disembodied viewer. As Michel De Certeau writes of the spectator imagined by the 'panorama city,' "It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows

one to read it like a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopical and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more." Wellstood's engraving operates metonymically for how "we" as "New Yorkers" are to visualize "our" own history—a unified, knowable totality untroubled by the contingencies of power and position. As De Certeau emphasizes, this gaze is also that of the capitalist planner.

Emphasizing this project of epistemological transparency, one of the curators commented that the research for the show was like "a detective story on a massive scale, trying to discover how New York became the city we know today." Hence, "Art and the Empire City" is not merely an inquiry into the past; it has a crucial role to play in the shaping of the identity of the present. Or better put, an inquiry into the past here provides legitimization of the present by attempting to unveil an inner core of dynamism at work. This was an ideological maneuver Benjamin identified in 19th century capitalist culture whereby mythic pasts were summoned to legitimize the bourgeois society as the inevitable actualization of human destiny. The proliferation of the "Grecian Style" in the architecture and design of the period on display at the Met seems to confirm Benjamin's analysis. For example, we find in one wing a ceremonial kettle made of silver which was presented by the New York Telegraph company to an engineer who had overseen the connection of Boston and New York by wire. The lid of the kettle is bordered with a miniature silver rendition of a telegraph line. This emblem of mastery over energy and space encircles a figurine of Zeus poised to hurl a lightning bolt. Thus is staged the self-fashioning of the bourgeoisie: through the mingling of the primeval and the iconography of technological progress, a continuity is constructed between capitalist expansion and a transhistorical principle of divine creativity.

Although it doesn't strictly adhere to the conventions of a historical survey, "Art and the Empire City" nevertheless narrates the process of social change according to a teleological principle of urban ingenuity. A panel reads, "During this period, New York began to embody the demands and desires of its ambitious and cultivated populous. At this time, the city

to architectural designs, to interior decoration to high fashion, the exhibition is an attempt at unlocking the secret force of New York's economic and cultural dynamism through a hermeneutics of the object. Unlike Marx's treatment of the commodity as a cipher of a violent process of abstraction and expropriation, the exhibition codes these objects as material traces of the journey of the human spirit towards its ultimate destination: the globalization of free market capitalism. To quote FleetBank, the show is "a visual celebration of the innovative spirit of New York and its unparalleled ability to lead the way for our country and the world."

The exhibition devotes two wings to

culture, where technological innovation held forth the promise of realizing a classless heaven on earth. The following description by a contemporary journalist accompanies the Met's display and resonates with Benjamin's diagnosis of the "collective wish images" conjured up by capital: "A quaint city with crystal walls and crowded with the fairest products of industry and art, it opened upon the delighted spectator a scene of fairy beauty the likes of which had never been witnessed in the New World."

Benjamin described the industrial fairs of the nineteenth century as "the sites of the pilgrimage to the fetish commodity." And indeed, in this wing, we are treated with the material signifiers of pros-



This Is Your Brain on Urban Space. Any Questions? Jeremy Bentham has the Answers: If you look closely, you can see the House of God on the horizon.

sites in which New York's unique urban essence began to manifest itself: "Decorative Arts" and "Collecting and Conesneurship." A panel reads, "A measure of New York's increasing cultural sophistication was reflected in the high quality of foreign works on view in public exhibitions or acquired by New Yorkers for their personal collections." Pieces such as Bartolome Murillo's 1665 canvas *Four Figures on a Step* are regarded not only as aesthetic achievements to be contemplated in their own right—this is secondary to their meaning as testimony to the "evolution of American taste." This is an evolution the museum, with help from FleetBank, helps the viewer to participate in: "We are pleased to present the opportunity for children and their families to explore and celebrate the art of their city. We hope that this program will not only create a new context in which to view the treasures of the Metropolitan, but will also instill in them a new level of familiarity and appreciation for art."

The spiritualization of capitalist devel-

perity, novelty and choice so familiar to us from places like Times Square, while the social relations of production which gave rise to them are effaced under the guise of National-industrial 'creativity.'

The phantasmagoria of progress offered up by the exhibitionary techniques of the Crystal Palace and in turn by the Met itself rest on the charnel ground of recurrent economic crisis and social polarization. The period from 1825-61, presented simply as a time of "spectacular growth" marks the restructuring of a political economy organized around skilled artisanal production, to one based on the logic of the wage relation, the formation of reserve armies of dislocated immigrant workers, increasing specialization of the division of labor, the ascendance of finance capital, and the emergence of novel forms of class, ethnic and racial conflict.

The only appearance made by labor in the show's loving display of luxury goods and urban 'vitalization' is the occasional nostalgic reference to the names of

Finance capital requires images of urban space in which the conflicts engendered by its own dynamics have been thoroughly suppressed. The exhibition of "cultural treasures" assists in this effort.

emerges as the vibrant commercial and cultural capital it is today." Rather than an exhaustive archiving of events, the show attempts to decipher an underlying zeitgeist back to which all of the artifacts on display can be referred. From portraiture,

opment performed in "Art and the Empire City" finds its genealogical ancestor in a wing devoted entirely the Crystal Palace of 1853. Benjamin was fascinated by the intermingling of the mythic and the scientific so ubiquitous in nineteenth century

individual craftsmen-cabinetmakers, tailors, etc.—who by mid-century had largely been displaced by a novel profit making strategy based on piecemealing, homework and subcontracting. The perpetual

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The Danger of the Familiar

Intention and representation in Campus Center photo show receives scrutiny

by **Stephanie Rabins**

If you were to visit the current display of photographs in the lounge of the Campus Center, you might wonder what you are looking at. With the poster explaining the context of the show gone, the walls quietly hold a series of thirty or so black and white images in a recognizable, documentary-portrait style. The almost-familiar photographs depict women, mostly, and a few children. They are shot close-up so that we can gather little about their immediate surroundings; most of the rectangles are nearly filled with several faces, while the pictures that take a step back do so only far enough to show us a figure or two. In almost all of the images, the subjects confront the camera with a firm gaze or else pose, self-consciously, for the portrait they know is being taken. The women all look serious, some mournful or sad, others triumphant, a few verge on appearing iconic. In a few pictures, they embrace or hold hands. The images are poignant and emotionally profound — the sincerity of both the subjects and the photographer makes for a set of pictures that does somehow pull us in, move us closer, demand that we meet the gazes, force us to empathize.

There is something in the language of these pictures that can be read as "universal," but the project is strikingly narrow and specific. The show is called "Creatures of Relationships," and is a study of the women in the Family Violence Program at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women. The photographer is Marjorie Berman, a woman who,

the poster would have told us, does advocacy work in the prison that led her to this "raw and candid expose."

The pictures suddenly change. We know now that the women depicted are incarcerated and have lived through some sort of "family violence" that makes them eligible for a recovery program after being convicted of a crime. An accompanying packet that seems to have been photocopied out of a book or magazine explains to us that the pictures are about the healing process of these women that begins, necessarily, with the relationships they will form in this place. The packet matches words of poetry by the inmates with the photographs, and mentions the pictures' power to counter society's "grossly inaccurate" perceptions of women in prison.

We look closer into the pictures, seeking out clues about these women's lives. We can't gather much; the facility seems to be low security, as the women are wearing their own clothes and



Exhibit A: A photograph from Marjorie Berman's "Creatures of Relationships", on display in the Campus Center lounge.

spending time with their children. There are hints of casual chain-linked fences in the background, and a few images show trailer-like buildings surrounded by grassy yards — probably living quarters. Beyond this, there is little informa-

tion. Berman has clearly chosen to focus on the powerful faces and gestures of the women rather than the facts or details of their lives. It seems, in fact, that part of her agenda is to show these women's strength by making

them appear as normal, as "human", as possible. It is okay with her, even desirable, that the photographs are as vague in narrative as they are.

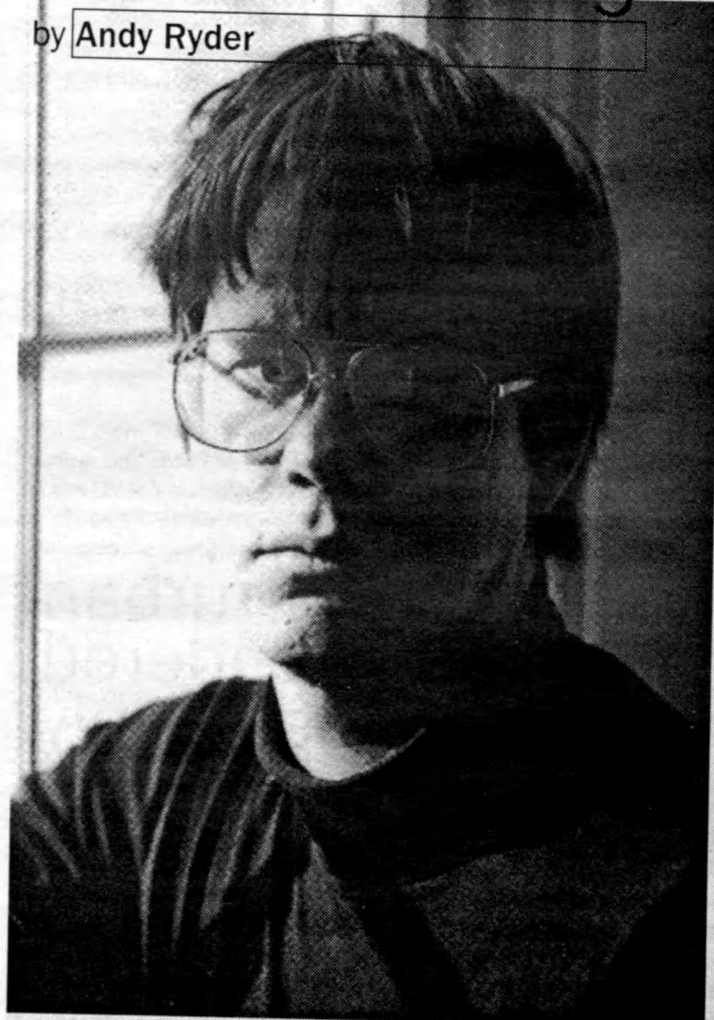
So what we see are pictures

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Despite our over-mediated, image-saturated culture, there remains an idea that because of photography's immediate and analogous nature there can still exist truly "raw and candid" pictures that allow their subjects to speak for themselves.

Vollmann Brings His Grit to Annandale

by **Andy Ryder**



This man is Vollmann: He is a freaky dude.

'... they had made exemptions for themselves. Their time, their bodies were their own. These ladies, so adept at inspiring passion in others, exalted me. Their performances demonstrated a sublime and spontaneous art.'

—William T. Vollmann, *13 Stories & 13 Epitaphs*

I didn't know William Vollmann had this reputation as a sort of hybrid of Indiana Jones and the Marquis de Sade until a couple days before he came to speak here August 2, but that seems to be what most people want to hear about. There's an unfortunate tendency to see the works of some writers in terms of their exploits. This is probably a tendency that's unavoidable when dealing with someone like Vollmann, known for kamikaze journalism that makes Hunter S. Thompson look prudent — befriending Nazi skinheads, smoking crack with prostitutes, getting caught in crossfire in Bosnia, spending two weeks alone in the North Pole. Anyone expecting to be impressed by Vollmann's appearance or demeanor based on that reputation was probably left wanting, but given that only one of his books, *An Afghanistan Picture Show*, is non-fictional, the quality of his prose should take precedence over his "too fast to live" lifestyle. With that said, his work is instilled with a profound honesty that demands a consideration of his own artistic responsibility that defies conventional postmodern notions.

Vollmann read from his new novel, *The Royal Family*, which I haven't read. Neither had anyone else in the relatively small audience, of which Vollmann voiced approval, as he "doesn't like to waste people's time reading them some-

thing they've already read." *The Royal Family* could be considered the third book in a trilogy dealing with street prostitutes (usually referred to as "whores" within Vollmann's narrative), following *Whores for Gloria* and *Butterfly Stories*. While *Butterfly Stories* was an excursion into Thai brothels and the limits of metafiction, Vollmann's reading suggested that his new work is at least in part more minimalist in style, reflecting a background in social reportage and hard-boiled, Chandleresque prose. Admittedly, it's difficult to generalize about the writing style of a work as reputedly epic as *The Royal Family*, which is close to the 1000 page mark and has been garnering comparisons to Joyce's *Ulysses*. This was a problem with the reading as well; while Vollmann gamely tried to summarize the events of the novel leading up to the excerpt he read, it was nearly impossible to derive much satisfaction from a small segment of such an intricate work. I doubt if anyone who attended the reading without some prior knowledge of Vollmann's work was particularly impressed, partly because the excerpt Vollmann shared avoided the more hallucinogenic and poetic excursions typical of his prose.

Whatever criticisms of Vollmann's lifestyle or subject matter, he is unmistakably an epochal writer, practicing an idiosyncratic fusion of New Journalism, symbolist prose-poetry, and urban fantasy. His recurring theme of prostitution, referred to in the preface to *Butterfly Stories* as "that most honest form of love," lends itself to a feminist criticism that hasn't been adequately explored. Vollmann could be accused of a sort of perverse vanity, both for his self-destructive behavior and his obsessive writing. Despite his fictional subject matter, Vollmann's work can be read on some level as a purging of his own guilt, both for his role as a heterosexual man — Vollmann related to the audience that he first met his prostitute friends as a customer — and as an American.

continued on next page...

Flacid Fruit and Acts of Nature

by **Raphi Gottesman**

FIVE BANDS PLAYED the old gym last night to a solid crowd who showed up despite the holiday of reading week. It was an evening of truly innovative experimental hardcore. Touchdown, a drum and bass duo from New York City, played a fine set. The bass player remained sitting for the entire set, presumably because her bass lines were so fast and rhythmically complex. Touchdown impressed the crowd with their ability to play tightly together even while their songs had multiple sections containing stop-start rigidity.

After a while, though, their songs tended to blur together and they lost the intensity they had in the first ten minutes of their set. Nonetheless, Touchdown is a band that clearly has the patience to create well-structured material. They are definitely a band to keep your eyes out for, and they did an excellent job of setting the tone for the evening by playing creative, spontaneous music.

My blood boiled with excitement as one of the most energized band of our time, Lightning Bolt from Providence, Rhode Island, was soon to play. Recognizing that the band before them (Pixel Tan) had been playing way too long for most people's ears, Brian Chippendale and Brian Gibson took matters into their own hands and started their set before Pixel Tan's had ended. The audience turned around in a fit of confusion and before their eyes was the

bass/drum thunderstorm known as Lightning Bolt.

The masked drummer plays turbo speed beats capable of sending the listener into a state of panicked frenzy. The bass player creates infectious finger tapping sounds that blast through numerous speakers loud enough to put the audience into a pain-induced trance. Normally, the drummer makes additional noise through a mini-microphone inserted in his



mouth. But technical difficulties plagued this part of the ensemble. Although these outer space noises are crucial to the band's records, the live performance was just as powerful even while largely lacking this element. Lightning Bolt is on Load records and for those of you who are moved by idiom-shifting experimental punk I recommend their silk screened seven-inch and LP, they are one of a kind.

Providence has been especially fertile over the last several years in producing over the top

Providence people are really weird. For example, I was taking a look at the record table they had set up, and one record's cover featured a man performing oral sex on himself — something my roommate sports editor Mike Morini has never ever tried to do. Anyway, the man behind the record table stands up and says, "You know, that's me on the cover." That should give you an idea what I'm talking about.

Anyway, next up was the whirlwind thrash deconstruction known as Melt Banana. These Japanese legends are now on

their third fifty-show U.S. tour in two years! Melt-Banana creates a sound capable of turning the world of hardcore punk on its head. They are brilliantly creative and unrelentingly intense. I've heard stories of the drummer smashing his head against the hi-hats rhythmically while his other limbs are rapidly torpedoing their way around the kit. After seeing them for the third time, I would believe any crazy story told about them. The bass player provides jet plane speed precision that sets the foundation for the layered sliding laser guitar and the uncompromising screeching vocals.

The crowd responded to MeltBanana's performance with

excitement. Common dance steps included rolling around on the sweaty old gym floor, muscle spasm misbehavior, and the "piggy-back". Melt Banana has some great records out now. *Charlie* (named after Bard's own Charlie Deebie) was released in 1998. They also have a great seven-inch on Slap-A-Ham records. October 31 is the release date of *Teeny-Shiny*, Melt Banana's newest LP. If you get this record and don't like it, we need to have a talk. And if you missed this terrific show, dry those tears! Lightning Bolt and Melt Banana will be back again, I'm sure!

Vollmann cont. . .

His *Seven Dreams* series, of which three volumes have been published, is meant to be nothing less than a complete investigation of the violent foundations of North American society.

Vollmann's writing is animated by a profound sense of responsibility to his fic-

his watercolors, advising that while heroin addicts make excellent models, having nodded out, habitual crack and speed users aren't very useful. Vollmann's work could be compared to the photography of Richard Kern; both rely on arguably romanticized notions of the freedom of the marginal, damned woman while subverting conventional stereotypes of the "hooker

Despite his fictional subject matter, Vollmann's work can be read on some level as a purging of his own guilt, both for his role as a heterosexual man and as an American.

tion which sets him apart from the dry satire of orthodox postmodernists like David Foster Wallace. Some literary critics have tried to associate his style with the ill-defined Avant-Pop movement, but an argument could be made for Vollmann's place in the lineage of what Timothy S. Murphy has termed amodernist writers — writers such as Vonnegut, Pynchon, Toni Morrison, and Kathy Acker who emerged from Ralph Ellison's promise to set forth a "plan of living" as opposed to the "love for the world through language" explicated by John Barth.

Vollmann's preoccupation with prostitutes could be interpreted as exploitation. He related to the audience his current practice of paying prostitutes to model for

with a heart of gold" or the Chaucerian "lusty" woman archetype. While Vollmann's use of prostitutes for his own artistic means raises questions about the nature of exploitation, his writing attempts to speak to and about (and rarely for) a class of society alienated from the capital, subjectivity, and language that constitutes postmodern reality.

Vollmann's comments raise troubling questions, endorsing the legalization of prostitution while relating his own ambivalent relationship with the profession. The presence of these disturbing questions confirms the relevancy of his work, a relevancy which may not have been adequately conveyed at the reading.

Photo Review cont. . .

of Any Strong Women, but the knowledge of their stories is supposed to lead us to some further conclusion. What does it mean when a set of pictures depends so heavily on context or an introduction, on some background with which a viewer must approach them? The reading of any photographs in a journalistic context, of course, relies on circumstance. It is not a failure when pictures cannot fully explain themselves, or a weakness when some information changes our understanding of them. Yet it is this malleability which has caused a widespread skepticism in recent decades of so-called "documentary" photographs.

Despite our over-mediated, image-saturated culture, there remains an idea that because of photography's immediate and analogous nature there can still exist truly "raw and candid" pictures that allow their subjects to speak for themselves. Never mind that there is almost a formula for various types of photographs. Never mind that not only do we feel that we have already seen these pictures, but the women in the photographs have as well and so, consciously or not, know how to appear in a photograph so that the message gets across in the "right" way. Never mind that a "candid" picture might not be a possibility these days, when we spend so much of our lives acting in ways that we have learned from images, in ways that we think might look natural on film or tape.

Berman does no one a disservice by taking these pictures, or by showing them in a gallery context where they are supposed to stand on their own, free from text. But if photography is to contin-

ue being a viable, creative form of media, we should ask for more. This is especially the case when we know that Berman's interests lie in prisoner advocacy, in "exposing" something, in changing public opinion. She should feel free, if not obligated, to show us more in her pictures, to take a stance rather than fall into the trap of believing that photography is a "transparent" medium.

We have seen these pictures before. Lifetimes of television, photography, films, and advertisements have taught us a specific way of reading imagery. Photographs have their own history, code and language; gestures, gazes, angles of the camera, composition, color, size, and context inform us of any picture's "meaning". We can almost hear a soundtrack accompanying Berman's show. This, in itself, is not a weakness. But there is a danger in following old forms and expected codes — in doing so it is possible to forget that we are always saying something in media. In the name of "objectivity" we forego some of our agency and our capacity to judge, our responsibility to state our political and social stances, our responsibility to call our photographs our own. Berman's pictures are effective, even beautiful, but they hide from the hard questions in their comfortable and swallowable method. The photographs do good to reveal to us that we could know these women. They fail to remind us, however, that we don't.



Madonna
Music
[Maverick/Warner]

IN OUR NARCOTICALLY decentralized world, celebrity serves as an instantaneous center upon which the attention of the many is focused. The mosaic of Madonna effortlessly commands the attentiveness of the masses, managing to effect a multifaceted function of group-awareness and participation such as no other pop star in history has been able to perform.

Madonna hails from a long line of pop stars — Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, and Michael Jackson, et al — that have effected this scandalously inclusive awareness in popular culture. She managed to subvert the obvious underpinnings of a predominantly male-driven music industry, manipulating her image and sexuality to an unprecedented extent, and achieved a remarkable level of success. The publicity generated by the unrelenting prodding of the media makes it easy to obscure the virtue of her abstracted musical effigy. Her collectively chameleonic image encompasses years of development and change, each stage of her career cryogenically frozen in the musical artifacts she leaves in her wake.

It is fitting that in the year 2000 she should reign over a market of ineffectual pop music that largely betrays her stamp and influence. Her triumphant *Ray of Light* launched an artistic resurrection that continues with *Music*, a glittery appropriation of French techno.

While not the most innovative mainstream rendering of electronic music, *Ray of Light* evinced musical risk-taking the

like most would never have expected from Madonna, and it reaped substantial praise as a result. *Music* ups the electronic credibility with the enlistment of producer Mirwais Ahmadzai, a principal figure of the French electro-revivalist trance scene, resulting in a Technicolor onslaught of big beats, synthesized textures, and excessively manipulated vocals, with an occasional acoustic strum thrown in for good measure. The production on this album — assisted by William Orbit and Mark "Spike" Stent — ranks among the most inventive and kaleidoscopic of the year. Listening to *Music* is less like nibbling ear candy and more akin to being force-fed an aural buffet.

With its "music makes the people come together" refrain, the title track implies an understanding of the communal impact Madonna exerts over the super-connected music market: That Madonna can co-opt any musical trend effectively and make it her own is a testament to music's ongoing development, assisting in the popular turnover of trends that would otherwise grow stale without an infringement into mainstream culture. The crossover absorption of these musics over time forces the hand of the underground in a sense, as it recoils in scorn from this pilfering and directs its efforts towards a more marginal aesthetic, continuing the cycle.

Madonna is the abstracted, surreal manifestation of this process. For better and worse, hers is the point where contrivances of image and culture become musical. Fortunately, *Music* the album remains all the better for this mechanistic call-and-response, and will perhaps stand as the most telling document of her later career.

A REAFFIRMATION of optimism embodied ages past, that Dan Nakamura can effectively remaster and repackage his 1996 solo debut EP *A Better Tomorrow* with six unreleased outtakes from the seminal Dr. Octagon sessions is testament to the reuptake and



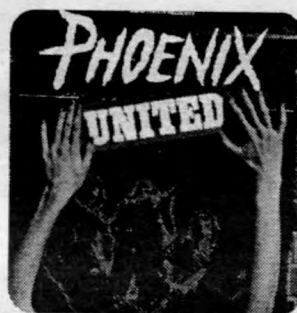
Dan the Automator
A Much Better Tomorrow
[75 Ark]

extension of alternative hip-hop. This project incarnate — benefiting inestimably from the shattered mind rhyme schemes of Kool Keith alter ego Sinister 6000 — laid the blueprint for the cinematic soundscapes that would follow on the seminal Dr. Octagonecologist. The modest estimation of a distinct production identity manages a relevant celebration of hip-hop's myriad sonic possibilities four years after the fact, setting a standard for abstract sci-fi collagists the world over.

Enhancing the musical backdrops on this reissue are the talents of a handful of contributors. Kool Keith's Sinister 6000 lends his skill to six tracks, providing an enticing perspective of one of rap's preeminent MCs at the top of his game. "King of NY" demonstrates the striking interplay between Nakamura's dense instrumentals and Keith's psychobabble freestyling that made the two the most complimentary of collaborators. Kool Keith's metrical meditations continue on the confrontational "I Want the Mic", featuring the turntablist talents of one DJ Q-Bert, while the rough textures of "Buck Buck" accompany the coarsely jagged lyricism of MC Poet fittingly. The moving evocation of urban claustrophobia on "Wiling", a showcase for Neph the Madman, provides the contemplative core of this collection.

The philosophy of execution evident in loping, pondering instrumentals such as "Sleep" and "4:17" symptomatically helped set the stage for the coup of the DJ/producer in the underground rap world. Smart beats, more heavily and liberally applied

than on Nakamura's later work, propel meditative juxtapositions of sighing strings, space-age transmissions, and snake-in-the-grass bass slinkings. Asserting the veritable quandary of composition in hip-hop, "The Truth" showcases a loosely established groove peppered by the occasional tinkling of piano and the jazz colorings of restrained horn flairs. Clearly the reigning personality of this enterprise, with *A Much Better Tomorrow* the Automator posits an enhanced revision of his utopian mixocracy, based upon the deft musical application of a budding artistic vision.



Phoenix
United
[Source/Astralwerks]

THIS ALBUM COULD have been horribly wrong. A seamlessly schizophrenic pastiche of stigmatized popular music styles, it might come as no surprise that the French and their unmatched appreciation of cheese have delivered this peculiar specimen. Without batting an eye, Phoenix variously combines chunky metal riffs with jazzy drumming, shifts into a white soul flavored disco groove, and surrounds it all with a production that rings the studio texture of Steely Dan and Hall & Oates into the contemporary dance age. *United* is one of the most confoundingly brilliant debuts of the year, the type of album that thwarts expectations while affirming music's overwhelming capacity to amaze.

After an all-too-brief exploration of late 70s power-pop on "School's Rules", the Phoenix methodology comes into perspective with "Too Young", a shimmeringly bouncy nugget of disco-pop that puts the Sea & Cake in their

place, taking what it is they do to an unabashed level. This is followed by a smoothly ambling slow burn soul jam entitled "Honeymoon". Elsewhere, "If I Ever Feel Better" makes like the Bee Gees were the Beatles, while "Party Time" unleashes supremely accomplished punk pop that shines in this context. Having previously served as backing band for Source labelmates Air, the shocking thing is not that the boys in Phoenix have the musical agility to pull these various styles off, but that they do so with an irreverent abandon that effectively resurrects these styles and makes them their own. There is a shameless quality to the execution of such a plethora of influences, but it is legitimized by the celebration of music that is inestimably expressed.

The proverbial crest of the album arrives with the nearly ten minute centerpiece, "Funky Squaredance," the type of song that makes you think that anything is possible. Beginning ostensibly as a country ballad ornamented by pedal steel, things begin to go awry when vocodered vocals step in to detail an indifferent tale of woe. Then a sample from a hip hop party begins to enliven the track, adding festivities that build with a vocodered chant of the title which ultimately erupts into the type of forthright heavy metal soloing that pulls out every trick in the book. A charged atmosphere of awesome dimensions develops as the soloing progresses, bringing the listener nearly to tears, and it all ends with the vocodered chant accompanied by a riff you'd swear was lifted from the end of *Abbey Road*'s "I Want You (She's So Heavy)".

Moving beyond the limits of ironic 90s revisionism, Phoenix's sincere recontextualization of the musical fashions of the late 70s/early 80s blazes a trail akin to that of Astralwerks labelmates the Beta Band in terms of the focused eclecticism of sheer aural audacity. They expressively render the past as the future, and *United* stands as the privileged exemplar of their definitive synthesis of popular culture.



Bad Music for Bad People
[Trash Art!]

John Lennon said "writing about rock 'n' roll is like talking about fucking." I don't think he had modern hardcore — this mutant, irradiated breed of rock 'n' roll — in mind. Writing music reviews makes you feel sometimes like a pornographer, sometimes like an autopsy reporter, and reviews of hardcore are definitely in the latter category. It looks like the commercial assimilation of punk and hardcore like Green Day, Bad Religion, Sick of It All and Civ might be one of the

greatest blessings in disguise for any musical form; since then, punk has swallowed grindcore, noise, and avant-jazz improvisation, getting healthier, nastier, and arguably more threatening than it's been since the halcyon days of gobbing and pogoing, when bands like Chrome, Foetus, and Suicide could exist in the same scene as the Dead Kennedys and Discharge.

The diversity of the East Coast scene is well-represented by Trash Art!'s *Bad Music* comp. This CD gathers submissions from bands active in the Rhode Island-Massachusetts area between 1997 and 1999, with styles varying from 88-style youth crew hardcore to avant-noise instrumentalists. Converge is probably the best-known band on the album, contributing a track from their recent split with Agoraphobic Nosebleed. While it would have been more interesting to hear an original composition, this is an impressive example of their current post-grind sound, including a surprisingly soft, jazzy breakdown in the middle.

Nowhere Fast and In My Eyes play a sort of noisier variant of shout-along NYHC, and sound the most old-school punk. Lightning Bolt, who was supposed to play here this weekend with Melt-Banana but unfortunately cancelled, give us a five-minute session of varying harmonics that has more in common with rave-style hardcore techno than conventional punk song structures. This song is groundbreaking — bands are going to be trying to copy this sound for years, probably without much luck. Unholy BMX gives us "Drunk Upon the Cross," a sort of Einstürzende Neubauten-meets-the Bomb Squad arrangement of noise, including what sounds a lot like Sepultura samples, and Olneyville Sound System distinguish themselves with excruciating static blues. Grief mixes almost stoner rock-style Sabbath-rooted sludge with noisy, fast hardcore, with an impressive results on this track — I saw them with Dropdead last semester and they were a little hard to take, but for one song their mix of classic-rock riffage

and molasses-core noise is relentless.

The live compilation *Fiesta Comes Alive!* gathers tracks from



Fiesta Comes Alive!
(Fiesta Grande #1-5)
[Slap a Ham]

a number of (mostly) California-based, (mostly) power violence bands who performed at Slap a Ham's annual Fiesta at the legendary 924 Gilman club between 1993 and 1997. The recording quality is uniformly raw, which gives a feel for the general atmosphere but often interferes with the music. This is especially

evident in the Locust's performance, whose synth intro is unforgivably muddled. The Locust is also the only band that immediately sticks out, as virtually every band plays varying degrees of fastcore. Unique elements include Nuclear Armed Hogs's vocals, which seem to take their cue from Fear-style bellowing rather than the growling and shrieking now prevalent, and M.D.C.'s "Nazis Shouldn't Drive," a tribute to the vehicular death of Skrewdriver singer and white supremacist icon Ian Stewart, which sounds as traditionalist as rockabilly in this "extreme" company. Man is the Bastard doesn't sound nearly as innovative as their more recent recordings suggest, and Phobia sounds very close to their Napalm Death roots. Capitalist Casualties's tracks are, however, entertaining as ever. All in all, this is a good live album, but not nearly as diverse as the more recent east coast compilation.

Re-evaluating *The Why*

Alterntate viewpoint critiques Weiner and Cleverness

by Jean-Marc Gorelick

I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER a response to Jonah Weiner's article "Hyperreality & Media: *The Why*", printed in the October 4 edition of the *Free Press*. Weiner uses the adjective 'clever' many times to describe *The Why*, and he ends his review by writing: "Clever is a good word for *The Why*, then, as it gave the audience evidence of the presiding intelligence and degree of complexity at work behind. To call it ultimately unsatisfying is a good description too, however, as cleverness, in this case at least, can only take us so far." I have read Weiner's article with the guiding principle that in its attempt at sounding clever it failed to take seriously some of the play's main arguments.

The very first sentence reads: "The title of Victor Kaufold's *The Why* acts in clever compliment to one of the play's most pronounced thematic concerns, creating what the play itself seeks to create: an ambiguity, circularity, and ultimate impossibility between the ideas of question and answer". I too read the play as questioning the linkages between cause and effect, causing an ambiguity between the two. Clever doesn't seem to be a bad thing here; Weiner is using the word to compliment the play. Weiner goes on, correctly, to describe *The Why* as the supposed search for the Cause behind the recent outbreak of school shootings. He writes that Kaufold wrote the play in response to the media's portrayal of the school shootings and I agree with him, that "the media based hunt . . . brought into being the very creature it purports to track". This makes sense. The stories we tell about inexplicable phenomena is how we make sense of the world. Kaufold's play was a critique of the way in which those stories were told by the media.

This being the case, why does Weiner go on to say that "a seeming result of this suggestion (i.e., that such answers can be infinitely elusive and perhaps nonexistent) is the playwright's own reluctance, manifest in the play's myriad of tongue-in-cheek episodes and self-reflexivity, to take a side on the issue, to point a finger with any significant amount of conviction." Two things: 1) Kaufold does not say that answers can be infinitely elusive and perhaps nonexistent. In the entire article, Weiner cleverly avoided writing about Kaufold's most important scene, the scene of the Why. Here Kaufold says the Why does exist and will always exist and has always existed. "It is I. I am the Why." How much more existent does Weiner want the Why to get? I will come back to this issue later. 2) The tongue-in-cheek episodes do not preclude Kaufold taking a stance on the issue – his stance seemed to be that the media's sensationalist portrayal was drawing on the excitement of all the spectators i.e. all of us. We all got perverse excitement out of the coverage of the school shootings – I will also come back to this later. So, I disagree that Kaufold remains noncommittal, for reasons that will become clearer.

Weiner condemns the use of "types", "caricatures", "satirical sendups", etc. Is there any attempt on Weiner's part to see the benefit of Kaufold's strategy? Perhaps

Weiner is yearning for real and authentic characters who can better express themselves. Yet it is this yearning which is under interrogation here. The media works with types, Weiner works with types, I work with types – they are unavoidable. The belief in some authentic person who is separate from the problem of "types" only serves to deny the prevalence of "caricatures" in our daily interactions with one another, in how we dress, what we say, etc. Kaufold conveys this through exaggeration, and I see nothing wrong with that. The media necessarily reports on school shootings with recourse to types: i.e. the troubled youngster, the outcast, etc. It is easy to criticize this for excessive typification, yet to a certain extent types are unavoidable. Rather than pretending to abandon the use of types (which is impossible) we should be more attentive to the use of types, the ways in which types are produced and received. This was what Kaufold's strategy enabled for me – I didn't ask, "Is this all you can think to say?" like Weiner did. I thought Kaufold was saying a lot.

Weiner mistakenly cites two instances when the "script recognizes the danger of its indulgence in Types". The first is the legitimate journalist. Why isn't the "self-proclaimed 'legitimate journalist' (Rayna Matthews)" a type? The way she was dressed, what she said, the 'serious' way she acted – all those things made her

ness?

I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER my own brief reading of *The Why*. I will focus on perverse enjoyment and the Why of *The Why*. Firstly, in two key scenes Kaufold demonstrates the libidinal investment humans have in perverse and obscene acts. These two scenes are the Evades scene and the Jasper Patterson/Marisa Vural reporter scene. In the Evades scene, it is made abundantly clear that Mr. Evades is not only portraying "repression and insularity", as Weiner writes. He is, more importantly, actively displaying his libidinal investment in the media coverage of the school shootings. He gets off on it. This obscene, perverse pleasure occurs in two moments. The first is when he is massaging his wife and looks like he's imagining strangling her and we see him getting very excited at this prospect. I thought he was going to strangle her, but instead he kept this desire to his imaginings. We might say that his sexual fantasy was to strangle his wife; Lacan might say that this was the Real of his desire. The second moment occurs when the two walk off stage and Mr. Evade yells at the prospect of media coverage of violence. His yell sounds orgasmic.

In the second scene, the Jasper Patterson/Marisa Vural reporter is also a case of perverse enjoyment. Here the obscene enjoyment of illegality, destruc-

Victor Kaufold told me how much importance this scene had for him. Almost everyone I spoke to talked about this scene. Why no mention of the Why in Weiner's review of *The Why*? It appears as though the Why of *The Why* didn't exist. This is even what Weiner says early in his article: "A seeming result of this suggestion (i.e. that such answers can be infinitely elusive and perhaps nonexistent) . . ." Thus, according to Weiner, the play offers no reason, no 'why' for the school shootings. Yet, isn't it made obvious that there is a reason? The reason is the Why, the character in white with a deep voice. Here is the play's tautology. Why are there school shootings? Because there are school shootings. There have always been traumas, there are now traumas, and there will always be traumas. There are always inexplicable events beyond our comprehension – this has been and will always be the case.

Obviously, some of the characters in the play believe in a Why. Recall the scene: Satan, Society, Guns. Which one is it? All three lock arms and jump around. Is Kaufold saying that the Why is everywhere, that it is in each one of those opinions? Is the Why forever eluding our grasp? This would be fine, but why personify the Why into a deep-voiced scary-looking dude? This has the effect of equating the Why with Evil. Why does the character get sick and crawl and then get up again?

Rather than pretending to abandon the use of types, we should be more attentive to the use of types, the ways in which types are produced and received. This was what Kaufold's strategy enabled for me.

into a type, the 'legitimate journalist'. Why does this legitimacy go unquestioned by Weiner? How is she not a type? The second instance is "the presence of characters like Robert (David Warth), who belong to the 'real people'". Here I ask Weiner, why drop the critical lens when confronted with the "real" Robert? Isn't he a type, too? Aren't the scenes between him and the psychiatrist clichéd as well?

Weiner writes that "Technically speaking, Bard's production of *The Why* was impressive" and I agree. The set was impressive. But now we return to the end of Weiner's article, quoted above. This ending left me baffled. How can cleverness take us only so far? Not once does Weiner mention an alternative to the cleverness of Kaufold's play. Why is cleverness bad and why doesn't it take us far enough? How would Weiner take the play beyond the limitation of its own clever-

tion, and death – "the ticking time bomb" – is the main object of the scene. This piece of obscene enjoyment, some might say jouissance, is turning Marisa (reporter) on just as it was turning Mr. Evade on. Weiner writes: "Though this encounter is a bit clunky in its suggestion of the seductive and impure interest of the media in 'violent teens', it is nonetheless given a certain power by excellent performances . . ." It isn't that the media is seducing the "violent teens", it is that "violent teens" are seducing the media. In this instance it is the violent teen on stage that is seducing Marisa. The violent teen is seducing Mr. Evade. The violent teen is seducing you the playgoer. We stand accused of having libidinal investments in violence – I believe Weiner has misinterpreted or failed to see this major point of the play.

Now on to the Why (the character in white with a deep voice). This scene is one of the play's most important moments.

This would mean that it had a mind of its own, a life of its own.

If I'm reading the Why correctly, as a sort of omnipresent entity, then I question its existence. There is no 'why', only the stories we tell ourselves about 'the why'. Thus it seems odd to condemn the Satan, Society, Guns group while then affirming the existence of this evil-like figure. Is Kaufold making a parody of this 'why' figure to such an extent that he also is saying there is no Why? Or is he saying that there is only this God-like reason for traumas, which exists but can't be proved? It is my belief that there is no uppercase Why to these school shootings, but there might be some lowercase why's. If Victor's play could talk, I'd like to see what it would say to this last statement. But, it can't. *The Why* was well acted and thought provoking. More plays should be like this at Bard.

Men's and Women's basketball tryouts

Mens starts this Wednesday at 5:30pm in the gym

(anyone interested who has or has not played on the team in years past is welcome to come)

Womens starts this Thursday at 7:00pm



Letters to the Editor and Community

AGAINST BAD PROSE

Bias impairs criticism as frequently as it provokes it. It is fortunate, then, that in this case I have no bias of which a detractor could accuse me—except for a high esteem for the English language, a basic and necessary bias for someone writing in English. I know neither Mr. Herdman nor Mr. McKee. While I have gathered an idea of what Danto is up to from reading these writers' articles in the *Free Press* and the *Bard Observer*, I am unfamiliar with him and cannot side with either argument. Like most Bard students, I care little about the spat between the papers; insofar as the articles of Herdman and McKee are a continuation of that foolishness, I have no opinion.

That said, it seems that McKee, whose article fills a whole page in the *Observer*, has no regard for either his readers or good English. I urge him to open up *The Elements of Style* and study its wisdom carefully, as he has made many of the stylistic indiscretions that Strunk and White warn against—wordiness, obscurity, and affectation, to name a few. He sacrifices clarity for academic chicanery; worse, he condescends to Herdman and his own readers. More than once he accuses his opponent of anxiety, but I can think of no prose more anxious than McKee's. It is, in a word, overwrought.

Accusations without evidence are unjust, so I have decided to use the opening sentence of McKee's article to support these claims. Here, those same stylistic errors that persist throughout the article are already present:

My most humble of aspirations will have been met if Aaron Herdman's anxious response in last weeks [sic] *Free Press* to my recent article on Danto and Duchamp can at all serve as testimony to the degree to which the purity and transcendentalism of the disciplines of philosophy and aesthetics today find themselves in crisis and in need of desperate ideological fortification.

If this sentence's difficulties lay only in the fact that it is quite difficult to read aloud, we could forgive its author, perhaps suggesting a reorganization of syntax and a humble comma here and there to more clearly express this "most humble of aspirations." But this is not the sentence's only difficulty. To begin with, why is this aspiration McKee's humblest? If he is really invested in his ideas, as the bulk of the article suggests, then this aspiration—the hope that Herdman's article shows just how vulnerable philosophical and aesthetic integrity are—might better be described as worthy or admirable. His humility is feigned; already disingenuous, the writing's tone becomes patronizing when he uses the word "anxious" to describe Herdman's article. McKee's needless sarcasm does little to make his argument any clearer.

Wordiness, however, is his most ubiquitous fault: McKee is in love with the syllable, even the empty one. His "can at all serve as testimony" ought to be "can testify." The mouthful "purity and transcendentalism" would be simpler as "integrity"—the meaning becomes slightly more general, but the *Observer* has given him ample space to refine it. "Omit needless words," Strunk writes, and with this maxim in the back of his mind, the reader asks himself what kind of fortification the integrity of philosophy and aesthetics would need besides an "ideological" one. Philosophy and aesthetics are, after all, about ideas; "brick" or "double-paned glass" wouldn't do; "ideological" is redundant.

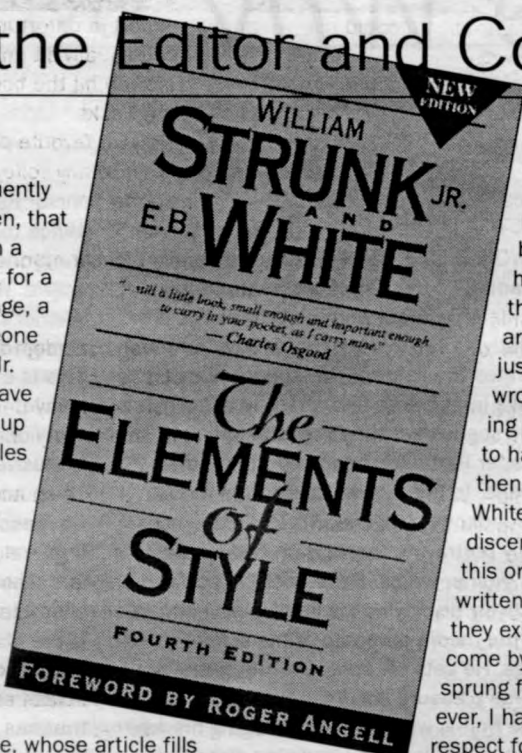
McKee also meddles with sensible usage of the future perfect tense. What, exactly, is "will have been met" doing there?

Revised, the sentence would look something like this:

My aspiration has been met if Aaron Herdman's article in last week's *Free Press*, written in response to my recent article on Danto and Duchamp, can testify to the crisis in which the integrity of philosophy and aesthetics finds itself.

Not too good, it is at least understandable. I will not belabor my position by going on to the next sentence, even though "regulatory intervention" might be more absurd than anything in the string of words that precedes it.

In my freshman year at Bard, I handed in a rather latinate paper—which I thought the height of eloquence,



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FOREWORD BY ROGER ANGELL

reading McKee's article; one cannot help thinking that McKee's intention was not to deal with his opponent's argument thoughtfully, and allow the reader the pleasure of following his reasoning. Instead, it seems that he wanted his reader to throw down the paper after a few sentences and say, "Gee, I guess he really showed Herdman. This guy knows some big words!"

My argument might be called irrelevant. I have said nothing of McKee's ideas; language is beside the point; perhaps I am, after all, a little dull. But if someone has the audacity to reduce language to vulgar showmanship, to condescend to his reader and his opponent, to bamboozle while purporting to communicate—then he's asking for it.

—Zachary A. C. Holbrook

"HUMANITARIANISM" CONTINUED . . .

This was despite the willingness of other countries—including Pakistan, which suffered more deaths than any other nation—to stay in UNOSOM. In 1994 UNOSOM II withdrew, leaving Somalia to prolonged civil war and the desperate attempts of UN and African civilian agencies, as well as the few Somali politicians still alive, to save the lives they could.

Rwanda

In April and May 1994 nearly 1 million people were killed in Rwanda, now known as perhaps the most concentrated genocide in history. Between the April attack on the Hutu president of Rwanda and the eventual victory of the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front, almost the entire community of Rwandan Tutsis was wiped out. What made this sequence of events all the more tragic was the presence of a UN peacekeeping operation (UNAMIR) in Rwanda that could have stopped the genocide—if it had been allowed the troops, arms, and mandate to do it. The US blocked moves to secure all three.

The OAU's IPEP report states that "it is indisputably true that no nation did more than the US to undermine the effectiveness of UNAMIR". After having demonized the UN for its supposed role in Somalia, the US was reluctant to assist another UN peacekeeping operation; but it was also reluctant to allow anyone else to do so, since that would imply a loss of face for the US. It would also require the US to supply funds for the operation (as was required of all UN members).

As such, through its position on the Security Council, the US hindered and essentially destroyed UNAMIR's ability to do anything. It blocked measures to give UNAMIR the legal power to intervene in defense of civilians, instead requiring that they only fire in self-defense—or at least in the case of Rwandans. The US had a very different opinion when it came to Americans. In fact, the US (together with France) forced the UN to say that UNAMIR was authorized to go further than self-defense if assisting in the evacuation of foreigners.

In other words, when it came to Americans, UNAMIR could use its

guns as they were intended. But when it came to the hundreds of thousands of Tutsis dying on a daily basis, UNAMIR had to stand by the side, reduced to shouting and firing shots in the air. There are few instances in recent history which rank beside this one for sheer cruelty.

Having already restricted its field of operations, the US then became the prime lobbyist for a Belgian push to reduce UNAMIR to 270 troops—hardly enough to protect the UN buildings. The resolution passed under intense US pressure; but the UN Force Commander, General Romeo Dallaire, conspired to stall and keep UNAMIR a higher level of strength. If he had followed orders no one knows how many more would have died.

Finally, in May a resolution was passed that renewed UNAMIR (now UNAMIR II). At that point Dallaire required 50 armored vehicles to evacuate civilians. The US agreed to supply them. Then they demanded 50% more than the standard price. After that, they said they needed to know the color to paint the carriers. Finally, they wanted the UN (to which America already owed in excess of a billion dollars) to pay for transport through Germany. After all this incredible stalling, the carriers made it to Rwanda two months later—by which time the RPF had taken control of the country and ended the genocide. Dallaire said later that those vehicles could have saved thousands of lives.

The stories that come out of UNAMIR troops' experiences, and out of the genocide itself, remain as testimony to American policymakers' cynicism. Ghanaian troops remember screaming and shouting and breaking down in tears when watching the killings they couldn't stop. Reporters remember Dallaire desperately trying to get help for fleeing civilians that he couldn't provide because he had no money, no arms, no troops. When they returned home the Belgian troops ripped their berets to shreds in protest at their government and the United States. It is not surprising that many UNAMIR commanders, including Dallaire, suffered mental breakdowns in later years and left their military postings.

Conclusion

To the thousands who were hacked to death at Nyarubuye, and to the hundreds of Somalis who died under American machine guns, in some ways the UN had been the only hope. That hope was betrayed. A great deal of the responsibility for that betrayal lies at the gates of the United States of America, which was alternately too cheap, too cynical, and too brutal to allow the UN to try and save human lives.

Despite all this, we are told that it is the Africans who are "mindless" and the UN that is incapable of assisting them. That Africa is a land of savannah, trees, lions and pesky black people who have this nasty tendency to kill each other. That America is the only nation that cares about human rights, and there's just nothing the good Americans can do.

To see through this rhetoric is not enough; we need to see it as a justification for policies that are at best cynical power games and at worst straightforward imperial domination. The UN remains the best hope for many around the world. It's our job to make sure that America doesn't destroy that hope again.

—Shankar Gopalakrishnan

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Sports! . . Yet to Come!

MEN'S SOCCER

Friday, October 20: Hudson Valley Men's Athletic Conference Tournament, 3 p.m.
 Wednesday, October 25: vs. Simon's Rock (away), 3:30 p.m.
 Saturday, October 28: vs. Casenovia College, 3 p.m. (last home match)

WOMEN'S SOCCER

Thursday, October 19: vs. Suny New Paltz, 4 p.m.
 Saturday, October 21: vs. Mt. St. Vincent, 3 p.m.
 Wednesday, October 25: vs. Mt. St. Mary, 3:30 p.m.
 Saturday, October 28: vs. New Jersey City University, 1 p.m. (last home match)

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

Wednesday, October 25: vs. St. Joseph's College of Conn. (last home match), 7 p.m.
 Women's tennis
 Saturday, October 21 vs. Manhattanville College (last home match), 2 p.m.

Women's Volleyball Lucky, Lucky, Beautiful Bunch

Head coach Bill Doyle and assistant coach Eva Bodula, of the women's volleyball team, have been extremely lucky this year receiving an extremely cordial, friendly, and amazingly talented group of girls. The team currently has a record of 4-1 in their conference and 8-9 total. Lead by co-captains Emma Kreyche and Veta Allan, the team won a very close match against Mt. St. Vincent's College on Saturday 8-15, 11-15, 15-7, 15-11, 15-11. Song Lee's 11 kills, Deirdre Lowry's 11 digs, and Westfield Mass' Sarah Davies 34 assists helped in this amazingly close match. The two co-captains posted season high's in service aces (Kreyche 5, Allan 5), blocks (Kreyche 4, Allan 5), digs (Kreyche 16, Allan 17), and kills (Kreyche 13, Allan 18) making them this issues featured athletes. So I interviewed them. Both my friend Max and I asked the two athletes questions:

MJ: So, volleyball, where's it headed?

VA: It's generally heading in an upward direction, we're

looking forward to recruiting next year but we could use a little bit more administrative support.

MJ: If you had the power to change our school's motto to "a place to spike" would you do it?

VA: Yes.

MJ: What position do you play?

VA: Middle blocker.

MJ: Do you have a nickname on the team?

VA: Yes, sunshine.

MJ: Oh isn't that cute.

MJ: The referee stands sure resemble lifeguard stands. Do the ref's borrow our pools stands, or are they completely different?

VA: The referee stands are different than lifeguard stands because they depend on the structure of the pole to support them.

MJ: Will you expand a bit about volleyball shoes?

VA: Volleyball specific shoes are propogandized by Bard as essential to the sport, but we feel that every foot is different and we should be given the choice of footwear. Bard is based on the principles of democracy and freedom of choice. We demand that not as a privilege but a right (anonymous).

MJ: How do you get pumped for a game?

VA: I meditate on my lucky number. You see, I wanted my lucky number, 4, on my jersey, but Bard does not carry a number 4 jersey in the volleyball department. So I got number 13 because 3+1=4. Voila!

MJ: How do you balance academia with volleyball?

VA: I work till the wee hours of the "morn." This is important to me because volleyball is the strength to carry on and become a well rounded person.

MJ: Book compared to volleyball?

VA: Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street, because it is an emotional rollercoaster!

MJ: Next year's advice?

VA: Just do it man!

MJ: Have you ever touched the net?

VA: Yes, but I'm working on not touching it ever again.

MJ: What's your favorite kind of dog and why?

VA: I hate dogs.

So then Emma was interviewed...

MM: Has being on the Bard women's volleyball team changed your study habits?

EK: With any kind of activity everyone has to rearrange the way they schedule their time. I am on a sports season most of the time here at Bard, but it (volleyball) is far more beneficial than detrimental.

MM: How do you get hyped for a game?

EK: We had a team dinner the other night and that was really nice. Forming team relationships helps us to improve our court dynamic.

MM: Do you think sports at Bard are taken serious enough?

EK: Bard sports aren't taken as serious as they are at most other schools, but that's not really a problem. Bard athletes commit lots of time to their sport and put all the energy and effort in that direction as possible. Bard sports could use some higher attendance rates and the lack of adminis-

trative support in unfortunate.

MM: Do you usually sit on the couch and "veg" after a game or do you hit the books?

EK: I hit the books.

MM: Who's your favorite profesional volleyball player?

EK: I don't know any volleyball players. I don't watch professional sports.

MM: Position?

EK: Middle blocker man.

MM: Nickname?

EK: no.

MM: Have you considered turning pro after you graduate?

EK: Absolutely not.

MM: Do you know why Bard's mascot is the Raptor?

EK: It was an arbitrary change. There was no real history behind the change.

MM: Do you think it should be changed to the bowtie?

EK: Perhaps.

MM: Do you prefer nike or rebok?

EK: Neither. They are all made in sweatshops.

MM: Is there anything else you would care to add to this interview?

EK: I am really excited because we have a relatively young team. As an upperclassman I was nervous about how it would come together, but I am pleased on how it's come together. I am especially pleased how we pulled through the last game. It shows how we've progressed. I am also excited about the coming years. We have a pretty solid base with this year's freshmen and hope to build on that in the coming years.

Sports! Wrap-Up

In Bard sports news... the men's soccer team played an amazing match Saturday against Albany College of Pharmacy but lost in overtime 2-1... Goksel Ergene scored the lone goal and Ridaa Murad assisted on the goal... women's soccer lost 8-0 against Becker... women's tennis kicked some Sarah Lawrence ass 7-2... Diana Nan won at 1st singles Samantha Boshnack won at 4th singles and Katie Winklestien-Duvenneck won at 5th singles...

In other news... I saw my best friend's dad on the beach and he has the most chest hair I have ever seen... it must be at least 4-5 inches erect... the Yank's clinched it and will be facing the Met's in the world series... this will be the first "subway series" as it may be called since 1956 when two New York teams played each other in the series... Dwight Gooden had this to say, "I've never met anybody who likes both teams. They may tell you that. But deep down, they're either Mets fans or Yankees fans. I don't think it's possible to be both."

... this ain't gonna be pretty...

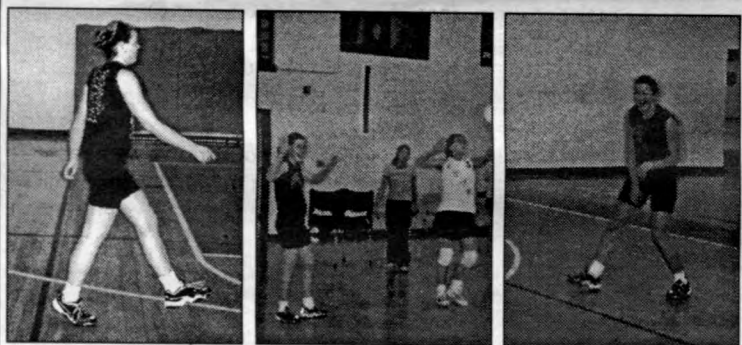
New York City residents are moving to the west coast as we speak...

I think we'll be ok in Annandale though...

Jeff Van Gundy is happy about the series... Giuliani will be cheering for the Yanks...

I guess even the mayor has to choose sides on this one...

So what ever happened to those phone directories?



Envisioning Urbanism, continued...

economic insecurity experienced by the vast majority of urban workers during this time of labor "flexibility" would not appear entirely foreign to much of the workforce of contemporary New York. A thorough excavation of this continuity would spell crisis for celebratory visions of the "Global City" both past and present.

The conspicuous presence of the word "Empire" in the title of the exhibition actually serves to direct attention away from New York's historical linkages to imperial and neoimperial expansion. New York's growth is suggested as a spatially self-enclosed process, with larger geo-economic systems given a supplementary role. It would be worth while, a la Fred Wilson to "mine" the occasionally visible chinks in the armor of this fabulous autonomy. For example, a luxurious rosewood couch made by a New York firm is acknowledged as having formerly belonged to a plantation owner in South Carolina. Although this is not the place to do so, such displays would compell us toward historical and aesthetic investigations of the radical contingency of New York's "success" on slavery and the extraction of resources elsewhere in the

world system.

A graphic illustration of the founding erasure of the 'New York' conjured by the show is a display dealing with the original design for Central Park drafted by Olmstead and Vaux in 1857. We are presented with a 'before' and 'after' lithographic images of the space where central park was to be situated. 'Before' Olmstead's intervention, the space is represented as a desolate, unpopulated swampland. Yet Olmstead's poetic vision implants a breath of life into this formerly threatening space of dead matter, transforming it into a blooming, harmonious synthesis of nature and culture. Inadmissible to this narrative of 'cultivation' is the violent eviction ordered by Olmstead of the settlement of *lumpenproletariat* squatters formerly claiming this "uncivilized" zone (a discursive and material process not unlike the "redevelopment" of New York we have witnessed over the course of the last twenty years.) Olmstead's famous project in designing Central park was to create a space in which the alienating and conflict-ridden experience of capitalist urbanization could be transcended, enabling a restoration of an essential urban commonality. Both morally and 'biologically' the fresh air and open space of Central Park was understood as a cleansing mechanism essential to the health and coher-

ence of the urban body: "Is it doubtful that it does men good to come together in this way in pure air and under the light of heaven or that it must have an influence directly counteractive to that of the ordinary hard, hustling working hours of town life?"

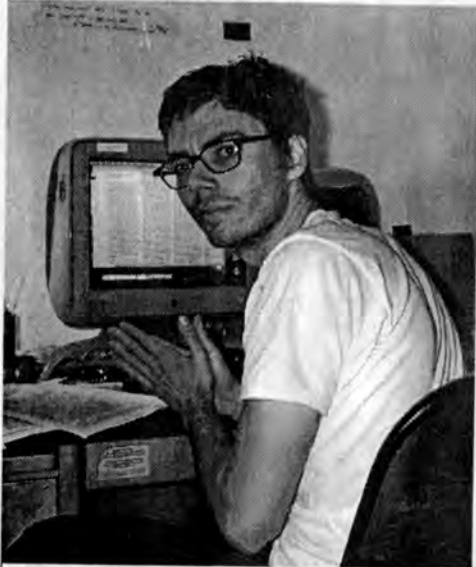
Not surprisingly, a similar nexus of nature, public space and social harmonization provided the ideological foundation for the creation of the Metropolitan Museum itself. This is indicated in the last wing of the show, devoted entirely to an enormous canvass by the American painter Fredric Church entitled *Heart of the Andes*. The genius of Church's rendering of the exotic, unspoiled Ecuadorian landscape inspired such conviction among when it was first displayed in 1861 that it "caused the citizenry to call for a municipal art museum," which of course the Metropolitan was the result. Thus, the museum is nothing less than the city's response to its own call-an immediate "embodiment of the desires and demands of its ambitious and sophisticated populace." The ambiguity of this latter phrase is suggestive of the contradiction riddling the entire museum. Does it speak for everyone living in the city of New York, who by virtue of their geographico-spiritual position, are inherently 'ambitious and sophisticated'? Or, more likely, does this phrase demarcate a normative model

of urban citizenship-that of white bourgeois men-which rests implicitly on the effacement of those regarded as marginal to the essential flowering of New York as the "cultural and commercial center of the world"?

The function of Art in economic restructuring and its cultural legitimization should not be underestimated. Indeed, precisely the *image* of cultivation, taste and cosmopolitanism itself can become a material force in the determination of corporate location strategies, flows of tourism (to the Met, for example), and real-estate markets. A spokesperson for FleetBank remarked, "...we're the leading real-estate lender in New York and we want to associate ourselves with things that say New York." Finance capital requires images of urban space in which the conflicts engendered by its own dynamics have been thoroughly suppressed. The exhibition of "cultural treasures" assists in this effort.

If, as Benjamin suggested the visual imagination of industrial society conjured forms from the "primeval past" to lend its own project an aura of harmony and necessity, the post-industrial bourgeoisie now invokes a mythic industrial past for the same purpose.

• STAFF PIC # 7 •



Yates McKee, the man behind the syllables: He's a peaceful man. Stop picking on him already!

The Bard Observer Staff Fall 2000

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Observer Editorial Policy

The Bard Observer is one of Bard College's several student-run publications. It is published every two weeks, on the following dates, with seven issues planned this semester: September 12, September 25, October 16, October 30, November 13, November 27, and December 11.

The Bard Observer encourages the submission of art work, photography, responses to editorials and opinion pieces, and letters to the editor and community. It offers free advertising space for student organization events. The deadline for submission is the Thursday prior to the date of publication. Text must be sent on a 3.5" floppy disk in Microsoft Word(c) format (for Macintosh(c) or PC), with accompanying double-spaced hard copy, via campus mail to "The Observer" or emailed in an attached file to observer@bard.edu. Please note that we make no changes to letters or club pages submitted to the Opinions section. Please check the spelling of your words and the capitalization of your letters.

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• SOME COMMENTS FROM SHANKAR GOPALAKRISHNAN •

America and "Humanitarianism": The Record of US Obstruction of Peacekeeping Operations in Africa

To much of the American press, the recent history of UN peacekeeping operations in the world is a litany of ineffectiveness, mismanagement and weakness. We are told that the UN has no hope of intervening in "tribal conflicts" brought about by "age-old ethnic hatreds"; that, in any case, the UN is a "global talking shop" and that all it has is a vast bureaucracy that doesn't get anything done. In contrast, America has supposedly "shown the way" by "putting its foot down" to "dictators and warlords" and showing them who's boss. The press repeats this story most often with respect to peacekeeping operations in Africa. The US and all other Western countries should simply stay out of African peacekeeping, we are told, because these conflicts are just "mindless ethnic killing".

Basing their coverage on this view, the press ignores the more detailed studies that come from the outside world about these conflicts. Such a blind spot is very convenient for the US government: despite coming from varying perspectives, almost every detailed international report on UN peacekeeping in Africa condemns the United States. Many of them repeat a fundamental fact: the US did not "stay out" but actively interfered in the implementation of UN operations that could have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. It is not merely a question of doing nothing: it is a question of blocking and hampering UN operations that did not accord with US publicity and strategic interests.

This point comes out most strongly in two recent UN operations: the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II [1993-1994]) and the United Nations Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR I and II [1994]). Together these two operations, and their failure, almost totally destroyed African nations' faith in the international community.

Somalia

To this day the US government blames the United Nations entirely for the failure in Somalia, claiming that the UN "dragged out" the operation, endangered American troops, and lacked a coherent command structure. As The Economist put it, this argument is sim-

ply "chutzpah". The UN operation in Somalia was hampered by American interference from the start. The US refused to place any combat troops under UN command, though they would remain in the country under US command. This made the UN vulnerable to sudden American political shifts, particularly after an American took over as the civilian head of the UN operation.

The specific crisis that led to disaster began in June 1993. Following an attack on Pakistani UN troops, the US and several other nations insisted that the UN launch a military offensive against one of the Somali clan leaders. In the course of this offensive American forces became famous for their brutal tactics, including bombing a Somali clan leaders meeting and killing some 53 Somali political leaders. These attacks culminated in the October storming of the clan leader's headquarters—an attack by US Delta Force crack troops, under American command, on American orders and on an American mission that the UN wasn't even told about.

In that attack the Americans killed an estimated one thousand Somalis, the majority of them civilians; even if a quarter of them were armed, that makes this one of the biggest single massacres anywhere in the world in the past ten years. It is not surprising that the Somalis fired back and killed 18 American soldiers.

When news photos of the dead soldiers inflamed public opinion in the US, the government rewrote history and blamed the incident on the UN. It argued that it was the UN's idea to pursue the clan leader (false—the US was as enthusiastic, if not more so, and insisted that the resolution get passed) and that it was UN command that had bungled the operation (false—the UN didn't even know it was happening). The US did not even mention the Malaysian UN troops that rescued the trapped Delta Force, losing one of their own soldiers in the process. No one in the US ever heard anything about the massacre of civilians.

Having blamed the UN for an American disaster, the US subsequently pulled all its troops from Somalia and insisted that the Security Council withdraw the UN operation.

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